

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 02562 261545Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 MCT-01 DHA-02 AID-05 CCO-00 OC-06
OPR-02 USSS-00 SCA-01 A-01 OMB-01 SY-05 IO-13
ACDA-07 ORM-02 EB-07 TRSE-00 /121 W
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P R 261503Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4160
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE 258
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 2562

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI,LE
SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION MAY 20-26

REF: BEIRUT 2408 (DTG 191508Z MAY 77)

1. SUMMARY: RELATIVE CALM RETURNED TO NORTH LEBANESE TOWN OF
BILLA, BUT HEAVY SHELLING CONTINUED IN SOUTH. GOL SPOKESMEN
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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 02562 261545Z

TRIED TO SOFT-PEDAL SIGNIFICANCE OF LIKKUD VICTORY. FORMAL
MANDATE OF QUADRIPARTITE COMMITTEE EXPIRED AMIDST CONSIDERABLE
PESSIMISM ON PROSPECTS OF IMPLEMENTING CAIRO ACCORD. PRIMIN
AL-HOSS DENIED RUMORS THAT HE WOULD RESIGN AND BLAMED "LACK OF
POLITICAL AGREEMENT" FOR INHIBITING PROGRESS ON RECONSTRUCTION
IN LEBANON. FINANCE MINISTER RAPHAEL SAID GOL HAD APPROVED
CURRENT EXPENSES SECTION OF 1977 BUDGET. WALID JUNBLATT LEFT

FOR CAIRO AS FIRST STEP ON TRIP TO SEVERAL ARAB STATES. END SUMMARY.

2. QUIET IN NORTH; SHELLING IN SOUTH.

RELATIVE CALM RETURNED TO NORTH LEBANON TOWN OF BILLA, ALTHOUGH SYRIAN FORCES CONTINUED TO SEARCH FOR PEOPLE INVOLVED IN INCIDENTS OF MAY 14-15, ACCORDING TO LEBANESE MILITARY SOURCES. IN SOUTH, HOWEVER, ARTILLERY SHELLING BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND PALESTINIANS CONTINUED ON ALMOST DAILY BASIS, SAME SOURCES REPORTED. ON MAY 24 PALESTINIANS DESTROYED WATER PUMPING STATION FOR CHRISTIAN TOWN OF MARJAYUN. (COMMENT: THIS IS LIKELY TO CAUSE CONSIDERABLE HARDSHIP NOW THAT WARM WEATHER HAS ARRIVED, AND CHRISTIANS ARE LIKELY TO RETALIATE WITH INCREASED SHELLING. END COMMENT.)

ELSEWHERE, OCCUPANTS OF A CAR FIRED UPON SYRIAN CHECKPOINT NEAR CHRISTIAN TOWN OF JEZZINE AND WOUNDED SEVERAL SOLDIERS. ASSAILANTS ALLEGEDLY CAME FROM VILLAGE OF HOMMSEYE, THREE KILOMETERS WEST OF JEZZINE, WHICH SYRIANS SUBSEQUENTLY SURROUNDED AND SEARCHED FOR SUSPECTS.

3. REACTION TO LIKKUD VICTORY.

GOL SPOKESMEN HAVE TRIED TO SOFT-PEDAL SIGNIFICANCE OF LIKKUD VICTORY IN ISRAEL (SEPTEL). SPEAKING ON TELEVISION MAY 20, FOR EXAMPLE, FONMIN BOUTROS SAID ISRAELI ELECTION RESULTS DEMONSTRATED "THE NEED TO DEAL WITH THE LEBANESE CRISIS ISOLATED FROM THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE" AND SAID THAT LEBANON SHOULD BE ABLE TO "FIND A SOLUTION TO LEBANESE PROBLEM, WHATEVER OUTCOME OF PALESTINIAN PROBLEM." PALESTINIAN SPOKESMEN CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BEIRUT 02562 261545Z

HERE REACTED WITH "WE TOLD YOU SO ATTITUDE" (SEPTEL). Wafa NEWS AGENCY ON MAY 18 QUOTED PLO INFORMATION CHIEF MAJED ABU SHARAR AS SAYING "WE CONSIDER THE VICTORY OF THE NOTORIOUS TERRORIST MEHACHEM BEGIN AS CONTINUATION OF ZIONIST POLICY OF ANNIHILATING PALESTINIAN PEOPLE."

4. PESSIMISM ON CAIRO ACCORD.

FORMAL MANDATE OF QUADRIPARTITE COMMITTEE EXPIRED MAY 26 AMID CONSIDERABLE PESSIMISM OVER PROSPECTS OF IMPLEMENTING CAIRO ACCORD, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF YASSIR ARAFAT'S STATEMENT IN ABU DHABI MAY 22 THAT UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD PLO AGREE TO BE STRIPPED OF ITS WEAPONS IN LEBANON. INDEPENDENT AN NAHAR MAY 24 EDITORIALIZED THAT QUADRIPARTITE COMMITTEE HAD FAILED IN ITS MISSION AND THAT PALESTINIANS WERE NOT WILLING "FOR THE TIME BEING" ADHERE TO CAIRO ACCORD, SINCE THIS WOULD MEAN LAYING DOWN THEIR ARMS AND GOING BACK TO CAMPS. AN NAHAR CONTINUED THAT POSITION OF "CERTAIN LEBANESE ELEMENTS" (I.E., KFUR FRONT) HOSTILE TO PALESTINIANS HAD CONSEQUENTLY HARDENED. MEANWHILE, SAUDI AMBASSADOR AL SHAER

TOLD PRESS THAT QUADRIPARTITE COMMITTEE WOULD NOT MEET MAY 26 OR ANY OTHER DAY UNTIL IT RECEIVED ANSWERS FROM PLO ON HOW TO IMPLEMENT PROVISIONS OF CAIRO ACCORD PERTAINING TO PROTECTION OF PALESTINIAN CAMPS.

6. HOSS DENIES INTENTION TO RESIGN.
PRIME MINISTER SALIM AL-HOSS HAS DENIED PRESS ALLEGATIONS THAT HE WOULD SOON RESIGN. ON MAY 23, AN NAHAR PUBLISHED UNUSUAL EDITORIAL CHARGING HOSS GOVERNMENT HAD "SINCE ITS INCEPTION BEEN MOVING IN A VICIOUS CIRCLE." PAPER CLAIMED THAT HOSS WOULD RESIGN AND HIS GOVERNMENT FALL BY END OF MAY IF PROGRESS WERE NOT MADE ON PALESTINIAN QUESTION. IN INTERVIEW WITH ENGLISH-LANGUAGE IKE MAY 24, HOSS REPLIED "I'M NOT THINKING OF RESIGNING YET" AND THAT GOVERNMENT RESHUFFLE "WOULD BE PREMATURE AT THIS TIME."

7. HOSS CRITICIZES POLITICAL DISCORD.
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PAGE 04 BEIRUT 02562 261545Z

IN PRESS CONFERENCE MAY 24, PRIME MINISTER AL-HOSS DENOUNCED CURRENT "LACK OF POLITICAL AGREEMENT" IN LEBANON. HE SAID "POLITICAL CLASHES WERE INHIBITING THE GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY" TO MOVE AHEAD WITH RECONSTRUCTION AND WERE DISCOURAGING PRIVATE INVESTORS FROM CHANNELING FUNDS TO LEBANON. HE ADDED THAT POLITICAL DISCORD WAS ALSO IN LARGE PART RESPONSIBLE FOR UNWILLINGNESS OF DISPLACED PERSONS TO RETURN TO THEIR HOMES. HOSS NOTED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT NEVERTHELESS DID NOT INTEND TO ASK PARLIAMENT FOR EXTENSION OF EMERGENCY POWERS EXPIRING END OF JUNE. HOWEVER, GOVERNMENT MIGHT ASK FOR "SPECIAL POWERS IN CERTAIN AREAS ONLY."

8. GOL APPROVES PART OF BUDGET.
IN INTERVIEW CARRIED BY NATIONAL NEWS AGENCY MAY 16, FINANCE MINISTER FARID RAPHAEL SAID GOVERNMENT HAD APPROVED CURRENT EXPENSES SECTION OF 1977 BUDGET, WHICH WOULD PROVIDE FOR EXPENDITURES OF LL 1.27 BILLION (AS COMPARED TO LL 1.15 BILLION IN 1976). HE ANTICIPATED REVENUES OF LL 1 BILLION, WITH LL 270 MILLION DEFICIT TO BE FINANCED BY ISSUING TREASURY BONDS AND BORROWING. RAPHAEL ALSO INDENTED, HOWEVER, THAT GOVERNMENT HAD NOT YET APPROVED KEY SECOND SECTION OF BUDGET COVERING CAPITAL EXPENDITURES. (LEBANESE FISCAL YEAR CORRESPONDS TO CALENDAR YEAR.)

9. WALID LEAVES FOR CAIRO.
WALID JUNBLATT LEFT FOR CAIRO MAY 23 AS FIRST STOP IN TOUR THAT WILL ALSO INCLUDE VISITS TO OTHER ARAB NATIONS. AN NAHAR TERMED WALID'S MAY 19-20 VISIT TO DAMASCUS "RESOUNDING SUCCESS," RESULTING IN AGREEMENT TO FORM JOINT COORDINATION COMMITTEE OF POPULAR SOCIALIST AND BAATH PARTIES.
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